

FUNERAL AT DAWN

I stand in a ring of sunlight on a corner.
It is none of my business what those men dig forth.
The tall one yawns, the fat one races the motor,
And another drops a wet sack into the earth
And softly curses while tomatoes spatter.

Those garbage men, those rude mechanicals
Who cannot read what I have written here
Likely as not, those charming pastorals
Pose for the poem's lie, and do not care
Whether or not this rhythm flies or falls.

Without listening, they hear the snores
Of plump lawyers asleep behind clean walls.
Without asking, they know not even whores
Get up as early as they. Inside the halls
Of pomp, the roach crawls gently under doors.

Being myself both hypocrite and liar
Of skill, I might approve this pretty scene:
The dead untroubled, and the living afire
Only to cart the sewage off unseen.
Yet I have risen. I must face the fear:

Turning his face away, the straw-boss now
Probes with a sure mortician's grace beneath
A flap of canvas flung across the jaw
Of a half-rotten dog. The others laugh
Into a mock-parade of mourners, and throw

The corpse over the tail-gate, and its head
Bursts from its thorax, and it has no eyes,
Being blind as lawyers still asleep in bed.
And, while the trash-men's fingers drip surprise,
I stare into the mirror in my head.

James Wright